1-2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) A release control method for providing early deployment releases of a software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and platforms, the method comprising the steps of:

a. providing an early development branch of the software system that is designated for incorporation of one or more software modules providing support for new features and platforms;

b. receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new platforms;

c. committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms into the early development branch; and

d. using the early development branch, generating a new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms;

~~The release control method of claim 1~~ wherein the pre-tested software module is received at a pre-integration branch that is separate from the early development branch, and wherein the committing step comprises committing pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms from a pre-integration branch into the early development branch.

4-8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) A system for providing early deployment releases of a software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and platforms, comprising:

a. an early development branch of the software system designated for incorporation of one or more software modules providing support for new features and platforms;

b. logic for receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new platforms;

c. logic for committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms into the early development branch;

d. using the early development branch, logic for generating a new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles; and

e. logic for generating said new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles;

~~The system of claim 8~~ wherein the logic for committing comprises logic for committing pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms from a pre-integration branch into the early development branch.

10-18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) A release control method for providing early deployment releases of a software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and platforms, the method comprising the steps of:

a. providing an early development branch of the software system that is designated for incorporation of one or more software modules providing support for new features and platforms;

b. receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new platforms;

c. committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms into the early development branch;

d. using the early development branch, generating a new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms;

~~A method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:~~

receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

20. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in Claim 19, further comprising the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.

21. (Currently Amended) A release control method for providing early deployment releases of a software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and platforms, the method comprising the steps of:

a. providing an early development branch of the software system that is designated for incorporation of one or more software modules providing support for new features and platforms;

b. receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules

comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new platforms;

c. committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms into the early development branch;

d. using the early development branch, generating a new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms;

~~A method as recited in Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:~~

receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature individually, and in combination with all other features;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

22. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in Claim 19, further comprising the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.

23. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium comprising one or more stored sequences of instructions for providing release control using early deployment releases of a software system, the early deployment releases

containing support for new features and platforms, which instructions, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to perform the steps of:

a. providing an early development branch of a software release that is designated for incorporation of support for new features and platforms;

b. receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested source code modules, wherein each of the pre-tested source code modules comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new platforms;

c. committing the pre-tested source code for new features and platforms into the early development branch; and

d. using the early development branch, generating a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms.

24. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 23, further comprising the steps of:

receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

25. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 24, further comprising the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been

committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.

26. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 23, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature individually, and in combination with all other features;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

27. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium as recited in Claim 24, further comprising the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.

28. (Currently Amended) A system for providing early deployment releases of a software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and platforms, comprising:

a. an early development branch of the software system designated for incorporation of one or more software modules providing support for new features and platforms;

b. logic for receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new platforms;

c. logic for committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms into the early development branch;

d. using the early development branch, logic for generating a new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles;

e. logic for generating said new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles;

~~A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the steps of:~~

receiving and testing a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

29. (Previously Presented) A system as recited in Claim 28, further comprising the step of generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only

when the plurality of software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.

30. (Currently Amended) A system for providing early deployment releases of a software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and platforms, comprising:

a. an early development branch of the software system designated for incorporation of one or more software modules providing support for new features and platforms;

b. logic for receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new platforms;

c. logic for committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms into the early development branch;

d. using the early development branch, logic for generating a new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles;

e. logic for generating said new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles;

~~A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the steps of:~~

receiving a plurality of software source code modules that support new features or platforms at a respective plurality of business unit pre-integration branches;

at each business unit, testing each feature of the software source code modules of that business unit individually, in combination with each other feature individually, and in combination with all other features;

committing one or more of the plurality of software source code modules from the one or more of the business unit pre-integration branches to a central pre-integration branch only when such testing is successful; and

committing the plurality of software source code modules from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch when all the modules have been committed from the business unit pre-integration branches to the central pre-integration branches.

31. (Currently Amended) A system for providing early deployment releases of a software system, the early deployment releases containing support for new features and platforms, comprising:

a. an early development branch of the software system designated for incorporation of one or more software modules providing support for new features and platforms;

b. logic for receiving, from a plurality of integration units, a plurality of pre-tested software modules, wherein each of the pre-tested software modules comprises one or more new features or supports one or more new platforms;

c. logic for committing the pre-tested software modules for new features and platforms into the early development branch;

d. using the early development branch, logic for generating a new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles;

e. logic for generating said new early development release containing pre-tested software modules for new features or platforms on a regular recurring basis for a fixed number of cycles; and

~~A system as recited in Claim 8, further comprising the step of~~ generating, using the early development branch, a new early development release containing pre-tested source code for new features and platforms only when the plurality of software source code modules has been committed from the central pre-integration branch to the early development branch.